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Council for Education Policy,
Research and Improvement

**FLORIDA TEACHERS
AND THE
TEACHING PROFESSION**

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FLORIDA TEACHERS and the TEACHING PROFESSION

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FLORIDA TEACHERS and the TEACHING PROFESSION

Introduction

The *Status of the Teaching Profession* is one of the five Strategic Imperatives identified by the Council for Education Policy Research and Improvement for its **Master Plan for K-20 Education**. The goal of this focus is “to ensure that the critical link between the student and the system at all levels is provided by the highest quality and most motivated teachers available – in numbers sufficient to fully meet the needs of the System.”

The most important factor affecting the quality of education is the quality of the individual teacher in the classroom. There is clear evidence that a teacher’s ability and effectiveness are the most influential determinants of student achievement. Regardless of the resources that are provided, rules that are adopted and curriculum that is revised, the primary source of learning for students remains the classroom teacher. More critically, the importance of good teaching to the academic success of students is intuitively obvious to any parent.

Florida’s public school system is the fourth largest school system in the U.S., serving over 2.3 million students in 67 public school districts. The student population continues to increase each year as over 44,000 new students enroll annually in Florida’s schools. Florida’s education delivery system is exceedingly complex, as follows:

- Florida has six of the 20 largest school districts in the U.S., with seven districts over 100,000 students;
- A number of school districts have experienced significant enrollment growth in the last four years (15 districts gained over 10% enrollment), while numerous smaller districts lost significant enrollment (23 districts lost enrollment) during the period;
- The number of high school graduates is projected to increase 37 percent between 2000 and 2010 (*this percentage will increase further if improved retention rates are realized*);
- During the past two decades, public school minority enrollment has grown from 32% to 47%, the largest increase realized by Hispanics, 8% to 19%.

Florida maintains an excellent teaching workforce, while continuing to strain to meet the needs of a growing and increasingly diverse public school enrollment. The most pressing challenge for Florida’s education system is the need for greater numbers of qualified public school teachers. Official state estimates show that more than 162,000 new instructional personnel will be needed in Florida between now and 2010. With enrollment increases and the recent historical rate of teacher turnover and retirements, the demand for additional teachers is expected to increase. This year alone, more than 14,000 teachers are expected to resign or terminate their employment and more than 1,000 additional educators will be needed to accommodate growing student enrollment.

An ongoing challenge for Florida teacher preparation programs and school districts is the ability to attract and prepare new, qualified teachers, while retaining the best veterans. There is not a shortage of teachers in every school district in Florida. There are urban and rural schools throughout the State, however, with significant needs for qualified teachers, particularly in the state’s critical teacher shortage areas.

The State must continue to seek ways to entice teachers who have left the system to return to the classrooms. Even as the state’s teacher preparation programs increase their production of graduates,

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many of those graduates do not go into teaching, and the attrition rate of beginning teachers remains too high. As a result, there remains a constant struggle by schools to employ and retain high quality teachers, especially in areas of rapid population growth, hard-to-staff schools and high-demand subjects such as Math, Science and Special Education.

Efforts to plan for the current and future education needs of the State have been made more critical by the passage of the 2002 Constitutional Amendment for Class Size Reduction. The amendment sets the maximum number of students assigned to each teacher teaching in public school classrooms to 18 students in pre-kindergarten to third grade; 22 students in grades four through eight; and 25 students in grades nine through twelve. Beginning with the 2003-2004 fiscal year, the amendment calls for the Legislature, not the local school districts, to provide sufficient funds to reduce the average number of students in each classroom by at least two students per year until the limits are reached.

Conforming to the class size limits will be a daunting task for Florida to undertake. Though conventional wisdom may state that smaller classes benefit students and lead to higher levels of achievement, a definitive connection between class size reduction and student achievement has not been made. With a majority of Florida classrooms over the proposed class size limits, a significant number of personnel, resources and new facilities will be needed to satisfy the limits. This new policy will require significant funding (estimated as high as \$27,500,000,000) and will dramatically raise the demands on finding qualified teachers to fill the additional job vacancies. According to Florida's Revenue Estimating Conference, an estimated 31,800 additional teachers and 30,200 additional classrooms will be needed to accommodate the class size limits expressed in the amendment over the implementation period.

To meet Florida's goals for its K-20 education system, every teacher must be fully prepared to teach upon entering the classroom and an environment must exist in all schools in which a high level of learning can occur where teachers are properly rewarded for achieving that result. Many teachers and administrators, however, believe that education policymakers and many in the general public have little understanding or concern regarding the complexity and demands of their daily roles and responsibilities. More critically, although the most important recruiters of quality teacher candidates have traditionally been classroom teachers, current teachers are now reporting that they are reluctant to recommend public education as a career choice to their own children, family members or high performing students.

To meet the challenges of the current and projected teacher shortage and the class size reduction mandate, all proponents of high quality teaching must promote teaching as a profession, with the level of respect, recognition and support that are accorded to doctors, lawyers, architects and engineers. It is clear that teaching, as a profession, will shape Florida's future. Fundamental societal attitudes toward teaching must change, however, to make teaching a profession that our best and brightest students aspire to, and to encourage those in the field to continue to strive to be the best that they can be.

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I. TEACHER PREPARATION

***ISSUE 1: POSTSECONDARY TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS:
ROLE AND EFFECTIVENESS***

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 1.

UNIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS ARE CRITICAL TO THE MISSION AND SUCCESS OF FLORIDA'S EDUCATION SYSTEM.

COLLEGES AND DEPARTMENTS OF EDUCATION, AS WELL AS OTHER PROVIDERS OF TEACHER TRAINING, MUST BECOME A PEAK PRIORITY OF THE LEGISLATURE, THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND EACH INSTITUTION'S BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND ADMINISTRATION IN ORDER TO STRENGTHEN THE STATUS, QUALITY, RESOURCES PROVIDED TO AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THEIR PROGRAMS.

Discussion

Both nationally and in Florida, teacher preparation programs have been subject to considerable criticism in recent years over curriculum, relevancy and productivity. Florida's state-approved teacher preparation programs have responded to legislative mandates by increasing liberal arts content, pedagogy and public school internship requirements. Through the initiative and coordination of the Florida Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (FACTE), the recently reaffirmed goals of the state-approved programs are to prepare teachers for Florida schools who are knowledgeable of their subject matter, skilled in teaching their content, and accountable for improved learning outcomes for their students.

Florida's 28 community colleges have an essential role as full partners in the preparation of teachers, as it is estimated that 40 percent of Florida teachers have completed at least a portion of their undergraduate science and math coursework at a community college. One component of the federal "No Child Left Behind" Act of 2002 calls for the increase in level of education for paraprofessionals working in public schools to an associate's degree at a minimum. Community colleges are accepting the role of providing appropriate associate degree programs to prepare paraprofessionals to work in our schools under the new federal guidelines. Additionally, proactive colleges, in strong partnerships with school districts in their region, are now offering courses for academic endorsements that supplement certification coverages in critical need areas, particularly Advanced Technology Certificates (ATC).

Selected Florida community colleges now have a role in the baccalaureate preparation of teachers. In 2001, the Legislature provided St. Petersburg College with the authority to offer baccalaureate degrees in selected areas, including Education. In 2002, Chipola Junior College and Miami-Dade Community College received approval from the State Board of Education to offer site-based baccalaureate degree programs in selected Education programs in order to increase access to the baccalaureate degree and address the need for teacher production in Florida. Both colleges are currently seeking the necessary accreditation to offer baccalaureate degrees.

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Policy Implications

Florida's public colleges/departments of education are responding to a renewed focus on their programs and services that is occurring in the new university governance structure. As exists in the traditional community college governance model, each state university now functions primarily through its own local board of trustees, made up of community leaders and institution advocates. New strategic planning activities occurring at many of these local boards are including a renewed commitment and emphasis on the relationship between the university and its local communities and their schools and students. The following are selected examples of university commitment and college of education outreach.

At the University of North Florida, its Board of Trustees recently approved a five-year strategic plan that includes the following specific goal:

The University of North Florida will continue to work closely with Florida's public schools, its community and four-year colleges, and its public and private universities to improve the quality and accessibility of educational opportunities offered to Florida's citizens. Special emphasis will be placed on the University's relationship with the PK-12 system and the education of future teachers and school administrators.

At the University of South Florida, the College of Education and its programs are cited numerous times in the USF Strategic Plan, specifically in relation to quality programs, preparing teachers for the state, particularly in critical shortage areas, and research regarding schools and their communities. There is explicit acknowledgement in the Plan that the success of the Technology Corridor is strongly related to the quality of teachers, school administrators and the schools. The USF College of Education is involved in numerous university-school partnerships and a number of centers and institutes related to the College are engaged in activities directly related to the schools, including the Anchin Center, the Center for Research on Children's Development and Learning, Institute for Instructional Research and Practice and At-Risk Institute, and Area Center for Educational Enhancement.

The University of Central Florida's College of Education is highly visible throughout the UCF Strategic Plan and the UCF President and COE Dean meet regularly with superintendents from the university's 11 county service region. The UCF Academy for Teaching, Learning and Leadership offers an Academy Fellows Program, which includes faculty from each of the colleges participating in research projects with K-12 schools. College administrators and faculty actively pursue and receive grants, including contributions from over 30 "Partners in Education" who represent area businesses and community agencies. The UCF College of Education also received \$2 million in special initiative funding during the past two years to expand academic programs to area campuses, sites and centers throughout the university's service area. The College now is #1 in research funding among the colleges, institutes and centers at UCF. Nationally, the College is a member of the Holmes Partnership and Renaissance Group and has a leadership role in numerous national and state partnerships.

A 2000 Department of Education study of Florida teacher preparation programs for new teachers found that new teachers, after one year in the field, expressed a high level of satisfaction (overall 92% satisfaction rate) with the preparation they received from their state-approved teacher preparation programs. Further, employers of these new teachers expressed a high level of satisfaction (overall 94% satisfaction rate) with the performance of new teachers. Preliminary

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findings of a 2002 survey of school district personnel directors found a significant majority of respondents with a high level of satisfaction with the quality of new hires who have completed state-approved teacher education programs in Florida.

Community colleges have long provided the crucial link for the successful articulation of students from high school to postsecondary education. More directly, colleges now provide an important connection to both the public school system and the university system for the preparation of teachers. Many community colleges are uniquely positioned to recruit teacher candidates from their local service area and maintain an important role in expanding the diversity of the teacher workforce. Small class sizes and flexible field experiences available at the colleges enable students to determine their interest in and commitment to teaching early in their educational career.

Implementation Strategies

- *The State's baccalaureate colleges and universities should closely coordinate their teacher education programs, degree requirements and services with the community college education programs in their region.*
- *Florida school districts should partner with universities and community colleges in their region to assist in the delivery of Education courses for district alternative certification programs, paraprofessional training and courses for certification endorsements in critical need areas.*

**ISSUE 2: POSTSECONDARY TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS:
PRODUCTIVITY**

POLCY RECOMMENDATION 2.

FLORIDA EDUCATION STATUTES, RULES, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES THAT IMPEDE INNOVATION AND FLEXIBILITY IN THE PREPARATION, CERTIFICATION AND EMPLOYMENT OF HIGH QUALITY TEACHERS MUST BE AMENDED OR REPEALED.

State-Approved Teacher Preparation Programs

Discussion

In Florida higher education, there is increasing frustration among many educators regarding the conflicting messages being delivered by state policymakers relative to the educational preparation of teachers. All institutions that have state-approved teacher preparation programs possess national and/or regional accreditation, and these programs include substantial general education requirements. The Legislature has mandated, however, an extensive set of admission and graduation requirements for the state's teacher preparation programs, while loosening the rules that enable alternative preparation programs to produce teacher candidates. Legislation for state-approved, baccalaureate programs in Education ties specific coursework to state certification and delineates credit hours that are required in specific disciplines. These mandates result in a narrow educational path for teacher candidates and often lengthen the time-to-degree. There is a need to resolve the

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conflicting requirements for teacher preparation and reach consensus on the best methods to produce quality teachers for Florida's classrooms.

Policy Implications

The discipline of Education is the only discipline in higher education in which the curriculum is dictated in Florida Law. In a period when the State is struggling to increase the production of qualified teachers and the state university teacher preparation programs are reporting excess capacity in most of their Education degree programs, the prescriptive requirements for teacher preparation programs are preventing the state programs from having the flexibility to develop and implement innovative strategies for students to efficiently become trained, certified and employed.

With the establishment of a new general knowledge test, content knowledge examinations and the required demonstration of the Educator Accomplished Practices as exit standards of performance, it is now appropriate to reduce the prescriptive provisions under which the state-approved programs must function. If the institutions are held to high standards of performance for their graduates, there is little need to legislate the process through which institutions enroll and prepare their students to achieve the desired levels of performance. The identification by the State of standards of specific knowledge and skills for highly qualified teachers is appropriate, but decisions of where and how the knowledge and skills are incorporated into an Education curriculum should reside within the individual program.

Implementation Strategies

- *Section 1004.04, Florida Statutes, Public Accountability and State Approval for Teacher Preparation Programs, and State Board Rule 6A-5.066, Approval of Preservice Teacher Preparation Programs, should be amended by the Legislature to:*
 - *Provide greater flexibility for state teacher preparation programs;*
 - *encourage innovation for all programs to increase the supply of qualified teachers;*
 - *coordinate state program reporting with federal report mandates to eliminate duplication.*
- *The Department of Education, in conjunction with representatives of the Florida Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, should propose specific revisions to the identified statutes and rules to the Legislature.*

Teacher Certification and Certificate Reciprocity

Discussion

The professional educator certification process in Florida is designed to ensure that the educational personnel in Florida public schools possess adequate pedagogical knowledge and relevant subject matter competence and can demonstrate an acceptable level of professional performance. All professional teaching certificates are issued only after the applicant has been employed as a teacher in a Florida school which has an approved system for demonstration of professional education competence, and whose employer has submitted to the Bureau the results of the applicant's fingerprint report.

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The Department of Education issues an Official Statement of Status of Eligibility to all applicants for initial teaching certificates. The Statement of Eligibility verifies the following for the applicant for a Temporary Certificate:

- A bachelor's degree with specialization (subject matter) requirements or a passing score on the appropriate Florida Subject Area Exam,
- A 2.5 grade point average on a 4.0 scale in the "initial certification" subject to be shown on a certificate.

If requirements are not met for the Five-Year Professional Certificate, a Three-Year, Non-renewable Temporary Certificate is issued which enables the employed teacher to teach for up to three years while completing requirements for the Professional Certificate.

To qualify for a Five-Year Professional Certificate, a teacher must:

- Meet requirements for the three-year nonrenewable Temporary Certificate.
- Satisfy the professional preparation requirement via completion of a state-approved teacher preparation program, 20 semester hours of specified Education courses with two years of teaching experience, or a state-approved, district alternative certification program with one year of teaching experience.
- Satisfy Florida's testing requirements by presenting a passing score on each of the following tests: Florida General Knowledge Test, Florida Professional Education Test and Florida Subject Area Test for each subject shown on the certificate.
- Successfully complete an approved system for demonstration of Professional Education Competence, if Option 2 above is chosen (20 semester hours completion).

In addition, there are direct routes to qualify for a Professional Certificate for individuals who hold standard certificates from other states or the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS).

Teacher reciprocity is characterized by an agreement or contract between two or more states in which one state recognizes the validity of another state's teacher licensure process and grants equivalent licenses to teachers who have moved in from a cooperating state. Not all states have such reciprocal agreements, nor do all states engage in teacher reciprocity.

A common method of establishing a reciprocity agreement is for states to enter the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) Interstate Contract, of which Florida is a party. This Contract facilitates the movement of teachers among the states that are members of NADTEC and makes it possible for a teacher who has completed an approved program and/or holds a certificate or license in one state to earn a certificate or license in another participating state. Receiving states may impose certain special requirements that must be met within a given period of time. As a party to this Contract, Florida has a reciprocal certification agreement with 47 other states and the District of Columbia.

In Florida, if you are certified in another state, you may qualify directly for a Professional Certificate. If not, there are other provisions for reciprocity by which another state's certificate, or another state's test of general knowledge, may satisfy one or more requirements for a Florida Professional Certificate.

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There are three Direct Routes to the Professional Certificate in Florida for teacher from other states:

Route 1: Experienced Educator from Another State.

- Hold a valid standard certificate from another state;
- Have earned two years of appropriate continuous full-time teaching experience [6A-4.002(5)] in another state within the five year period preceding the date of application for the Florida certificate;
- Apply for Florida certification in the subject(s) shown on the out-of-state certificate;

Route 2: Nationally Certified Educator.

- Hold a valid standard certificate from another state;
- Hold a valid certificate issued by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS);
- Apply for Florida certification in the subject(s) shown both on the out-of-state certificate and the NBPTS certificate;

Route 3: Educator Certified by a Comprehensive Testing State.

- Hold a valid standard certificate from a state, which requires general knowledge, professional knowledge, and subject knowledge tests for certification.

Policy Implications

The free movement of teachers across state lines can potentially help ease the teacher shortage in Florida, particularly with regard to critical teacher shortage areas, as well as compliment the teaching profession on the whole. Qualified teachers who are certified to teach in other states represent a significant resource for the Florida teaching profession, especially given the peripatetic nature of the state's population.

The Florida system of teacher reciprocity with other states is strong and includes a number of direct avenues to certification for qualified teachers from other states.

Implementation Strategy

- *Teacher certification statutes, rules and procedures, including standardized testing requirements, should be reviewed by the Department of Education, in conjunction with school district representatives, to be certain that no barriers exist to the employment of teachers, particularly as they relate to the state critical shortage areas and to the employment of qualified teachers from other states and school districts. Identified barriers should be amended or repealed.*

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ISSUE 3: POSTSECONDARY TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS: CONTENT and STANDARDS

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 3:

ALL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN FLORIDA THAT PREPARE INDIVIDUALS TO TEACH SHOULD REQUIRE CANDIDATES TO DEMONSTRATE THE EFFECTIVE TEACHING OF FLORIDA'S SUBJECT MATTER CONTENT STANDARDS AND THE PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES AND SKILLS IDENTIFIED IN FLORIDA'S EDUCATOR ACCOMPLISHED PRACTICES.

Discussion

Research has demonstrated a critical link between teacher quality and student achievement, and three crucial attributes of effective teachers have been identified: strong verbal and cognitive skills, deep content knowledge and experience. Increased demands on teachers and schools from multiple sources and directions continue to influence and alter what teachers need to know and be able to do. As a result, the preparation of teachers has become increasingly complex and now involves national, state, college and school district bureaucracies.

The federal government has buttressed the work of the states in education reform initiatives through the “*No Child Left Behind*” Act of 2002. This legislation is supported by the U.S. Department of Education’s report “Meeting the Highly Qualified Teachers Challenge” that confirms that there is now concrete evidence that smart teachers with solid content knowledge have the greatest effect on student achievement. The legislation directs all states to submit comprehensive annual reports on teacher quality and issues a call for states to radically transform their teacher certification systems and lower barriers that keep highly qualified candidates from pursuing teaching careers. The legislation states that “*every state should have a well-prepared teacher in every classroom by 2005*” and defines highly qualified teachers as those who not only possess full state certification but also have solid content knowledge of the subjects they teach. The law also calls for the increase in level of education for paraprofessionals working in public schools to an associate’s degree at a minimum. School districts that fail to comply with these mandates will face a loss of federal funding.

Another central component of the federal legislation is to ensure that every child can read by the third grade. A new program known as “*Reading First*” has been initiated to meet this goal and a national expert review panel is highlighting the need for scientifically based reading and the importance of early reading skills. A significant funding commitment has been made by the US Government and the Florida Legislature to implement these initiatives.

Policy Implications

As part of the 1995 time-to-degree legislation, the Community College System and the State University System developed three common prerequisite courses for potential teachers to take while in the first two years of their programs. The three courses are: *Introduction to Education*, *Teaching Diverse Populations* and *Introduction to Education Technology*. These courses transfer to the upper division, professional program of a university and become part of the teacher education baccalaureate degree requirements. The offering of the three common prerequisite courses in Education by community colleges has greatly expanded the pipeline for students into teaching and has resulted in a significant

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increase in students transferring into university Education programs. Currently, over 50 percent of Education students in the state universities have transferred from Florida community colleges.

Florida's legislatively approved Educator Accomplished Practices and Subject Area Competencies are now well integrated with course syllabi in the state-approved teacher preparation programs and students are currently required to achieve the content described in the state requirements for program approval. The 12 Accomplished Practices comprise the knowledge, skills and abilities needed by all teachers to support high student achievement.

The subject matter content standards include reading competencies that must be included in state-approved elementary education, prekindergarten, primary education and exceptional student education programs. State program approval requirements include coursework in reading and literacy acquisition. The Florida Department of Education received \$45.6 million for "Reading First" for the 2002-03 year and the Governor has responded with a comprehensive, statewide reading initiative called *Just Read, Florida*. Accordingly, the teacher preparation programs have responded to the national "Reading First" initiative of the *No Child Left Behind* legislation with new courses and programs that prepare teachers to teach reading. The Legislature provided funds for the implementation of a K-12 Reading Coaches Model Grant which supported the establishment of the Reading Leadership Triangle, an alliance between the DOE, Florida State University and the University of Central Florida, which are experienced in training teachers in scientifically based reading instruction. The Northeast Florida Education Consortium Reading Institute (NEFEC) provides training for school-based reading teams. Further, the Florida Reading and Literacy Excellence Center (FlaRE) at the University of Central Florida is an academy-like model that is implementing programs to increase teacher knowledge of effective reading practices.

The challenge for Florida's teacher preparation programs is not simply to prepare more teachers, but to prepare the teachers that are needed, i.e., teachers prepared to teach in subject areas and specialties that schools need most, teachers who are prepared and willing to teach in particular geographic areas and in low performing schools and teachers with diverse backgrounds. More specifically, Florida schools now need teachers who are prepared to teach new State and national standards, make appropriate use of instructional technology and encourage independent and critical thinking. While there is no one model for the preparation of teachers, there is now the expectation that teacher education programs should be driven by high standards and by the demonstration of specific teacher competencies.

Implementation Strategy

- ***Professional development programs for current teachers should include training on effective teaching strategies for current national and state education initiatives, like reading acquisition.***

Alternative Teacher Certification

Discussion

To address further the demand for classroom teachers, states have increasingly established alternative certification programs that are designed to train teacher candidates quickly, many programs utilizing a streamlined process that focuses at the end of the program on standardized examinations and performance demonstration. National research is finding that comprehensive

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alternative preparation programs that possess good candidate screening, appropriate skills training and ongoing supervision of beginning teachers can be as effective in the production of teachers as traditional, university programs.

Alternative programs have increased the diversity of the teaching workforce as they draw from broad talent pools and they often connect much more directly to the needs of urban and disadvantaged classrooms and schools. Locally established alternative programs often enroll a high percentage of minority students and train their graduates specifically to teach in hard-to-staff schools.

Policy Implications

Since all certification routes to teaching lead to the front of the classroom, it is clear that all education programs that prepare teachers must set and maintain high standards and possess strong and measurable performance assessment outcomes. In both state-approved teacher preparation programs and alternative certification programs, the central and critical component is the ability of a teacher candidate to demonstrate mastery of the professional knowledge and professional skills needed for effective teaching.

Florida's new statewide alternative certification program is now being implemented. The competency-based program is being provided via distance learning to school districts for non-education majors who are hired to teach based upon their mastery of subject content. The program includes a pre-work "survival training" period, collaborative partners for implementation, a support team with peer mentors and a comprehensive, standards-driven assessment system that includes content knowledge demonstration and professional education examination components. Florida school districts may utilize the new State program, may develop its own competency-based alternative certification program for teachers that are employed with a state-issued temporary certificate or may partner with Colleges of Education to deliver the program.

The critical component in the new state model is the assessment system that parallels the existing assessment system that is required in statute for the state-approved teacher preparation programs, with similar methods to determine mastery of graduates of the professional education skills and competencies. The assessment system is aligned with national standards for beginning teachers identified by the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) that defined what all teachers, nationwide, should know, be able to do and value. Candidates must demonstrate mastery of the professional knowledge competencies and the 12 Accomplished Practices and must pass the Professional Education Test.

Section 1012.56(15), Florida Statutes, requires the Department of Education to conduct a longitudinal study on the effectiveness of educators coming through different certification routes with different training experiences, including state-approved programs, alternative route programs, National Board certificate holders and educators coming from other states. Using student achievement data, effectiveness will be compared across these various certification routes.

Implementation Strategy

- ***The Department of Education should analyze findings of the longitudinal study on certification routes and produce an annual report, with recommendations to guide***

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legislative resource allocations that will optimize the recruitment, training, employment and retention of highly qualified teachers in the State.

ISSUE 4: NATIONAL BOARD FOR PROFESSIONAL TEACHING STANDARDS CERTIFICATION

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 4.

THE DALE HICKAM EXCELLENT TEACHING PROGRAM, WHICH SUPPORTS NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION FOR FLORIDA TEACHERS, SHOULD BE EXPANDED BY THE LEGISLATURE.

Discussion

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards measures a teacher's practice against rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do. The process (200-400 hours) is an extensive series of performance-based assessments that include four teaching portfolios, student work samples, videotapes, and thorough analysis of the candidate's classroom teaching and student learning. Certified teachers must meet high standards of practice and demonstrate their skills and knowledge through examination, portfolios and video demonstration lessons. Approximately 40 percent of the applicants successfully complete the process on their first attempt.

The certification process provides a nontraditional, career development opportunity for experienced teachers by providing professional advancement, recognition in their school and community and a benchmark for achievement in the profession. This certification process allows teachers with more than three years experience to analyze their effectiveness against a strict set of rubrics based on national standards. As a career development tool, it provides individualized professional development and upon completion, recognition from colleagues, schools and community leaders.

With over 2,200 National Board Certified teachers, Florida is a national leader, second only to North Carolina. During 2001-02, there were 3,434 Florida applicants for whom \$7.1 million was paid in fee subsidies to the National Board. Over \$9.3 million was paid in salary bonuses for 2,155 National Board Certified teachers, and nearly \$7.8 million was paid in mentoring bonuses for 1,802 teachers who chose to mentor.

The Florida Teacher Leadership Consortium (FTLC) is a statewide NBCT network that promotes the mission of the National Board and provides leadership and professional development opportunities for Florida's National Board Certified teachers and is dedicated to the expansion of qualified teachers in Florida.

Policy Implications

Through the Dale Hickam Excellent Teaching Program Act, the Legislature has increased the appropriation for 2002-2003 to \$48 million to pay 90 percent of the certification fee (\$2,300), provide teachers who achieve National Board Certification with 10 percent salary increase for the life of the certificate (10 years) and an additional 10 percent to those who agree in writing to provide

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the equivalent of 12 work days of mentoring and service to other teachers. The program also provides a \$150 incentive to help defray the costs for portfolio preparation.

A number of school districts around the state are supporting the process in a variety of ways by providing National Board Certified teachers with stipends, salary supplements, professional leave days and in-service points toward state re-certification.

Early studies are finding that National Board teachers are more effective educators and improve student learning in schools where they teach. These teachers take on leadership roles in their schools and become a valuable resource that can help schools meet state needs and priorities.

Implementation Strategies

- *The Department of Education and the Florida Teacher Leadership Consortium should establish a short-term goal of having National Board Certified Teachers in each of the state's school districts by the end of the 2002-2003 academic year. The Department should establish a long-term goal of having a National Board Certified teacher in every school by the 2008 academic year.*
- *The Department of Education should establish for all school districts a set of consistent mentoring policies and procedures for National Board Certified teachers. National Board Certified teachers should participate in the development of these polices and procedures.*
- *All candidates for National Board Certification should complete an orientation session prior to participation in the program. The Department of Education, in conjunction with the Florida Teacher Leadership Consortium, should develop and coordinate the orientation and should include a variety of program delivery options in flexible time frames for the candidates.*

II. THE RECRUITMENT OF HIGH QUALITY TEACHERS

National teacher supply and demand strategies typically focus on issues of teacher recruitment, distribution and retention. The employment and retention of teachers remain largely responsibilities of local school districts. States, however, increasingly are becoming involved in strategies that complement district recruitment efforts, particularly for hard-to-staff schools and high demand subject fields. Proactive states are finding that competitive salaries, with opportunities for professional growth, are key to efforts to attract and retain the most qualified teachers.

As school districts identify urgent shortages of teachers in specific subject areas and in specific geographic areas, recruitment efforts must be expanded beyond the traditional pool of new college of education graduates to include all individuals who have the potential to become qualified to teach in Florida schools, including:

- Teachers certified and employed in other states.
- Individuals certified, but not employed as teachers.
- Individuals with non-Education bachelor's degrees.
- Experts in specific subject matters who can teach part-time.
- Retired teachers.
- Individuals employed as school para-professionals or aides.
- College/university students.
- Secondary school students.

School districts must be both innovative and flexible in their recruitment efforts to employ highly qualified teachers. Florida law now permits districts to hire part-time teachers and to issue an adjunct teaching certificate to an individual who has expertise in the subject area to be taught (Section 1012.57, F.S.). This law allows school districts to tap the wealth of talent and expertise among Florida's citizens who may wish to teach part-time in a public school. Retired teachers can also be a significant pool of individuals around the State that may desire to return to part-time teaching employment. Greater utilization of these provisions by districts can address the demand for teachers, particularly in low-performing schools and in high-demand subjects.

The Florida Department of Education supports numerous programs designed to increase recruitment opportunities for the state's school districts, including:

- *Teachinflorida.com* - an online service with educator toolkit.
- Great Florida Teach-in - annual job fair.
- Florida Future Educators of America - 784 state chapters.
- Troops to Teachers – 359 placed since 1994.
- Incentive programs – financial assistance, residential subsidies/home loans.
- Alternative certification paths.

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ISSUE 1: EARLY OUTREACH PROGRAMS

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 5.

A COMPREHENSIVE, STATEWIDE PLAN FOR THE RECRUITMENT OF TEACHERS MUST BE ESTABLISHED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND THE SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO ATTRACT INDIVIDUALS, PARTICULARLY MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS, TO THE TEACHING PROFESSION.

Discussion

Research has found that teaching remains attractive to students who seek to turn high school, church and community service and volunteer experiences into a career and who desire to make a difference in their community, and programs that target local residents to become “home-grown” teachers often are successful. Early outreach programs should target these individuals in their recruitment efforts.

Some states have implemented comprehensive statewide programs (like the South Carolina Center for Teacher Recruitment) to recruit young citizens. Pre-collegiate initiatives in many states, such as Teacher Cadet Programs, Teacher Academies, Teaching Magnet Schools, Summer Camps for Teaching and Future Educator Clubs, are successfully attracting young students toward teaching careers.

Policy Implications

The value of proactive teacher recruitment programs designed for middle school and high school students cannot be overstated. Regardless of their level of sophistication, programs that provide information to young students on teaching as a career and that offer hands-on opportunities to shadow and assist teachers can create and solidify an interest in teaching.

Implementation Strategy

- *The program should include a broad marketing and public relations plan with ongoing, proactive programs that reach out to middle and high school students.*

ISSUE 2: FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 6.

A STRATEGIC PLAN THAT PROVIDES FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS THAT WILL MOST EFFECTIVELY ATTRACT AND RETAIN HIGH QUALITY TEACHERS MUST BE ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE.

Discussion

Florida continues to operate its public postsecondary education system under a strategy of low tuition accompanied by need-based financial assistance programs. The Florida Office of Student Financial Assistance administers a variety of student aid programs that are awarded on the basis of

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merit, financial need, attendance at an independent institution and other criteria. State aid administered outside of the Bureau includes funds generated by financial aid fees charged by community colleges and universities, direct appropriations to the state universities and fee waivers.

For the past two decades, Florida has offered financial assistance programs to support students and teachers in their pursuit of a teaching degree and credential. State administered programs have included:

- Critical Teacher Shortage Student Loan Forgiveness
- Critical Teacher Shortage Tuition Reimbursement
- Critical Teacher Shortage Forgivable Loan
- Chappie James Most Promising Teacher Scholarship
- Exceptional Student Education Grants
- Fund for Minority Teachers
- Instructional Aide Scholarship

Policy Implications

The 2002 Legislature did not appropriate funds for the Critical Teacher Shortage Scholarship Program, the Forgivable Loan Program, the Instructional Aide Program and the Exceptional Student Education Tuition Reimbursement Program for the 2002-03 year. The Legislature reduced funding by approximately 50 percent to the Critical Teacher Loan Forgiveness and Tuition Reimbursement programs. The prevalent view of policymakers was that the existing programs have not significantly increased the supply of teachers and that individual school districts have the resources and the specific staffing needs that enable them to narrowly focus financial assistance at the local level to meet their identified needs.

State financial assistance constitutes a small portion of the universe of aid provided to college students, estimated to be approximately five percent by the College Board. There is no doubt, however, that targeted aid programs, like forgivable loans and incentive grants for students and teachers, can serve as recruitment tools for schools and school districts to increase interest in and pursuit of teaching as a career. Such programs can also assist in the recruitment of teachers who have specific skills needed to work in low-performing and/or ethnically diverse schools.

Action by the 2002 Legislature accelerated the notion that state financial assistance programs for teachers and their educational pursuits should be reviewed and new methods of financial support for teachers and prospective teachers should be established that more effectively meet current and projected needs.

Implementation Strategies

- *An ad-hoc task force should be convened by the Department of Education to recommend to the Legislature the targeted financial aid programs and a Plan for their implementation.*
- *Financial aid programs should emphasize broadened and more generous loan forgiveness programs for all teachers, particularly during their first five years of employment.*

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- *State funds set aside for the financial assistance of paraprofessionals and teachers should be equitably allocated directly to all school districts for disbursement according to specific state program policies and local demonstrated needs for additional teachers.*

III. THE RETENTION OF HIGH QUALITY TEACHERS

In many districts throughout the U.S., teaching has been portrayed as a revolving door occupation. High turnover rates and chronic attrition of beginning teachers continue to create an ongoing, annual pressure for hiring and undermine the ability of a school to build and sustain a teaching/learning community.

National statistics show that approximately one-third of America's teachers leave the field during their first 3 years of teaching; almost one-half leave after 5 years. Much higher rates are realized in low-income and rural areas. After five years, teacher turnover rates taper off, averaging five percent for teachers with 6-8 years of experience, on out to 20 years of experience.

Survey research on teacher turnover by Ingersoll in 2001 found that school conditions are the primary reasons for dissatisfaction-related teacher attrition. The following specific working conditions were identified by teachers:

- Poor administrative support.
- Lack of faculty influence.
- Classroom intrusions.
- Inadequate time.
- Poor Salary.
- Student discipline problems.
- Poor student motivation.
- Class size too large.

Additional analysis by Ingersoll produced the following reasons why quality teachers choose to continue teaching:

- They have the content knowledge and teaching skills necessary to work effectively with their students.
- They receive the support and encouragement of their principal and colleagues, particularly at the beginning of their careers.
- They are given the time and opportunity to learn how to teach more effectively.
- They are satisfied with their compensation and the conditions in which they work.
- They want the opportunity to have their voices heard and work without unnecessary intrusions and paper work.

The Florida Department of Education annually collects data from school districts relative to the number of classroom teachers leaving the profession and their rationale for separating from service. The most recent survey conducted by DOE for the 2001-2002 academic year found that most Florida teachers leave employment for family or personal reasons, to relocate to another area or state or for retirement. For the period from July 2001 to June 2002, 6,704 teachers left the

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profession, representing 4.9% of the total number of Florida teachers. The average length of service for these departing teachers was 9.4 years. The top five reasons for voluntary departures, with survey respondents able to select multiple responses, were:

1. Family or personal reasons (29.8%)
2. Relocation (28.6%)
3. Retirement (21.1%)
4. Other, including career change, medical problems, etc. (15.9%)
5. Inadequate salary (6.5%)

It is clear that no teacher supply strategy will keep classrooms staffed with quality teachers if the system fails to implement policies and programs to reduce teacher attrition, particularly among young teachers.

ISSUE 1: TEACHER COMPENSATION

1a. MINIMUM TEACHER SALARY

<i>POLICY RECOMMENDATION 7.</i>
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<i>A MINIMUM SALARY LEVEL FOR ALL FLORIDA TEACHERS SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED BY THE LEGISLATURE.</i>

Discussion

Florida continues to lag behind the national average in beginning teacher salaries at a time when teacher recruitment is critical to the supply of qualified teachers. In the Southeast, Florida beginning teacher salaries lag behind those of Georgia, North Carolina, Virginia, South Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee, and Louisiana. The average teacher salary in Georgia has increased dramatically over the last several years. Georgia teachers have received some of the largest salary increases in the nation due to the governor's 1995 commitment to raise Georgia teacher salaries to the national average. This action has been successful, and Georgia average teacher salaries have moved from 30th to 16th in the country, although these figures do not account for the impact of Georgia's state income tax and health insurance and retirement policies. The base salary in Georgia for the 2002 fiscal year was \$28,338. Now that Georgia has brought teacher salaries in line with the national average, the focus is on improvement of salaries for experienced teachers to buttress retention.

A 2001 Survey and Analysis of Teacher Salary Trends conducted by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) found that the average beginning salary for Florida teachers was \$25,786 in 2000-2001, while the national average beginning salary was \$28,986, a disparity of \$3,200. For new teachers, the \$28,986 average beginning salary lagged far behind starting salary offers in other fields for new college graduates. For example, the AFT report found that accounting graduates were offered an average \$37,143; sales/marketing, \$40,033; math/statistics, \$49,548; computer science, \$49,749; and engineering, \$50,033.

State response to this issue in Florida is somewhat limited by the collective bargaining process that allows for local bargaining teams to develop teacher contract proposals for salary allocations within steps contained in the contract. Bargaining teams representing teachers are usually comprised of

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senior level teachers and district contracts reflect the influence of seniority in the bargaining process as the first few years of teaching typically allow for little in the way of increased compensation. As an example, the Hillsborough County School District is one of many districts that utilize a salary schedule with very little annual increases for teachers in the early years of employment. Hillsborough's 2001-2002 ten-month, salary schedule for Step One was \$30,001.26 (\$149.26 daily), for Step Five was \$30,704.76 (\$152.76 daily) and for Step Ten was \$31,810.26 (\$158.26 daily). In contrast, the recently ratified Leon County schedule for 2002-2003 offers the following teacher salaries for these steps: Step One - \$27,926, Step Five - \$29,288 and Step Ten - \$31,126.

Policy Implications

Beginning salaries for classroom teachers are at the low end of the spectrum for college graduates and, in most traditional school district salary schedules, the prospects for salary growth do not compare with other professions. When starting salaries are low and there is little chance for advancement for an extended period, it should not be a surprise for districts to experience a high rate of teacher turnover in the first five years of teaching. While it can be assumed that students choose teaching as a profession knowing full well the limits to compensation, it is also logical to assume that once in place, many teachers do not gain the degree of personal rewards expected and also find the limited salaries as added incentives to depart.

To attract academically bright and motivated individuals to teaching, school districts will need to offer annualized salaries, benefits and working conditions to new teachers at least equal to those offered in occupations requiring comparable education. Talented college students might be more enticed to enter the teaching profession in Florida if starting salaries could be brought to or above the national average.

Implementation Strategies

- *The Department of Education should recommend to the Legislature a competitive, minimum salary level following an examination of the following factors: beginning teacher salary levels in comparable states and in states in Florida's geographic region, teacher supply and demand data, beginning salaries of other professions with a bachelor's degree requirement and implications for school district salary schedules.*
- *School districts should review their teacher salary schedules and adjust the annualized salary steps of the first five years of the schedule to provide additional funds during these years as an incentive for new teachers to continue teaching. Current collective bargaining procedures should not be allowed to impede the recruitment and retention of qualified teachers.*
- *To increase the retention of young teachers, the Legislature should establish a funding mechanism that enables school districts to provide a significant bonus payment to teachers who reach five years of employment in the school system and who have been graded at outstanding levels of standards of performance during that time frame.*

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1b: PERFORMANCE PAY /A CAREER LADDER FOR TEACHERS

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 8.

FLORIDA'S SYSTEM OF TEACHER COMPENSATION MUST BE REDESIGNED SO THAT MERITORIOUS TEACHERS ARE REWARDED FOR DEMONSTRATED COMPETENCE, OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SO THAT A CAREER ADVANCEMENT STRUCTURE IS IN PLACE FOR ALL TEACHERS.

Discussion

The profession of teaching has traditionally offered little recognition to the experienced and highly skilled teachers in comparison to the novice teacher, other than annual, incremental salary increases given to all teachers equally based on how many years they have taught. In recent years, however, there has been a slow, but steady, movement in school districts around the U.S. to re-design the teaching workforce in individual schools to take advantage of the expertise of high-quality teachers and reward teachers for their skills, accomplishments and commitment through the establishment of a career advancement program. There is now considerable activity around the country to re-engineer the compensation system in education to be based on the traditional business model where employees are compensated differentially for different work responsibilities and quality of work and employees are rewarded for performance. Issues of job function and productivity are now seen as relevant to teacher compensation.

Performance or merit pay plans have existed in U.S. schools for many years as a method to improve schools by rewarding teacher performance based on their student's achievement and on supervisor's evaluations. These programs, however, have been difficult to design, difficult to ensure fairness and difficult to fund over time. In particular, both teachers and administrators have found it challenging to measure specifically what teachers contribute to their students' learning.

Performance pay models in public schools that have been unsuccessful have failed due to inadequate or biased evaluation criteria, inappropriate use of standardized tests or insufficient funds available for full implementation of the program. Evaluations of ineffective plans have also identified unintended negative consequences, such as teachers narrowly teaching to the assessment test and teachers' reluctance to accept challenging classes and/or student assignments. More critically, poorly planned programs have failed to recognize the cooperative and collegial aspects of the work of teachers.

Performance pay programs around the country that have been positively evaluated incorporate clearly defined and measurable assessment criteria for classroom teachers that include student achievement gains, the demonstration of increased skills and knowledge and expanded roles and responsibilities. These programs provide opportunities for teachers to serve as mentors for young teachers, to assume greater responsibility and leadership in the school and to increase professional standing. More importantly, classroom teachers are directly involved in the design of the outcomes-based compensation program.

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Policy Implications

Differentiated pay for teachers, within a school-wide system of teaching and learning accountability, will address the concern of paying all teachers at the same level regardless of abilities, performance and motivation. In recognition of the private sector model, it is clear that high achieving teachers, teachers in scarce fields and teachers who accept the most challenging classes deserve a higher level of compensation than mediocre, ineffective teachers.

Most recent teacher performance pay plans have attempted to establish a link between what individual teachers are paid and the academic progress that students in their classrooms make. In 1999, the Florida Legislature passed the A+ Plan, which included a Performance-based Pay Program for teachers. The legislation directed all school districts to establish a program and procedures for the 2002-03 academic year that allow up to 15 percent of teachers to earn five percent of their individual salary based on performance. When assessing performance, the law requires that the assessment be based primarily on the actual learning gains of students assigned to the teacher, based on performance on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). Each district is to set aside funds from their district budget to pay for these salary supplements. This law is in the early stages of implementation around the State, but preliminary reports indicate that district procedures are cumbersome and that many teachers are rejecting the program. Since the Legislature did not appropriate funds to implement the law, districts are utilizing existing salary dollars to set aside funds for this program.

A new performance pay plan implemented in a school district will need to be designed to strengthen the performance of all teachers and improve the achievement of all students, while make teaching more attractive and rewarding to potential teachers in the district. The establishment of more competitive salaries will give Florida an important recruitment tool to attract the best and brightest teachers, while at the same time increasing the quality of the State's teaching workforce.

Salary supplements or other incentives for teachers represent efforts of the State and/or school districts to increase the total compensation of teachers or to provide a reward for individual teacher performance, accomplishment or assignment. Incentive programs and salary supplements that are established by the State and school districts must be well planned and need to be designed with the input of teachers and principals. Since the overarching goal of salary supplements is to recognize and reward effective teaching, it is important that such programs are fair and open to all teachers who meet the criteria, are without quotas and are not subject to arbitrary reductions in individual rewards due to insufficient funds.

At the district level, recruitment incentives that have been utilized include:

- Contract signing bonuses.
- Relocation allowances; temporary lodging expenses.
- Part-time employment of individuals with specific subject matter expertise.
- Job sharing among teachers.
- Tuition reimbursement; loan forgiveness programs.

Salary supplements that have been successful have rewarded teachers for:

- Demonstrating a significant effect on student achievement.
- Assignment in low performing, hard-to-staff schools.

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- Mentoring or other school leadership positions.
- Earning an additional credential, particularly in a critical shortage area.
- Activity in school-wide improvement efforts.
- Advancing skills in technology.
- Enhancing skills in teaching reading.
- National Board Certification.

The 2000 Legislature established the Florida Mentor Teacher School Pilot Program, which is based on key principles of the Teacher Advancement Program created by the Milken Family Foundation. The goal of the program is to make teaching a more attractive profession and to expand the supply of high quality teachers. The elements include:

- Multiple career paths – Teachers move up the ranks knowing that compensation will increase as responsibilities, qualifications and professional development opportunities increase.
- Broad, market-driven compensation ranges. Mentor teachers may earn as much as \$70,000 each year.
- Multiple entry paths with intensive support and mentoring for new teachers.
- Performance-based accountability – Determined by student progress, academic achievement, performance demonstration and peer review.
- Ongoing, applied professional development – Through daily professional growth blocks.

A crucial component of the Mentor Teacher Pilot Program is the differentiated pay schedule for each staffing level, based on demonstrated performance. Under the TAP model, there are three levels of teachers, Mentor teacher, Lead teacher and Career teacher, with salary supplements that can increase a teacher's salary by \$15,000. Career paths with distinct promotional steps, from a teacher assistant to a mentor or master teacher, are established that provide a sequential and advancing level of status and pay. Each level is attained by a teacher through the demonstration of skills and knowledge and through expanded leadership responsibilities at the school site.

The primary goal of a comprehensive system of school accountability that includes a performance pay plan in a school district should be to support the education of all students to high standards based on the education goals of the state, district and school. Such a compensation system provides financial awards to all school personnel when the school as a whole achieves improvement in student learning and provides significant pay supplements for teachers when they meet clear standards of school improvement, staff leadership and professional development.

Recognizing the distinctiveness of Florida's 67 school districts in size and diversity, one statewide compensation incentive system for all districts is not recommended. A bold and innovative redesign of Florida's system of teacher compensation is needed, however, and is essential to the advancement of high quality teaching in Florida classrooms. Florida must support a system in which school districts can offer the pay, autonomy and career opportunities necessary to attract to teaching highly qualified people who would otherwise pursue other professional careers. Districts should be encouraged to develop a comprehensive career path reflecting multiple levels of professional status and competence through which teachers can move based on their demonstrated knowledge and ability – not on length of service. An effective performance-reward compensation system will enable the best teachers in Florida to earn higher salaries and advance professionally, just as in other professions, without having to leave the classroom.

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Implementation Strategies

- *A statewide, ad-hoc, task force should be convened by the Department of Education in order to develop a model for school districts to use to guide the development of a performance pay compensation system for their teachers.*
- *Section 1012.22 (1)(c)(4), Florida Statutes, Public School Personnel; Powers and Duties of the District School Board, should be amended by the Legislature based on the recommendations of the task force.*
- *A monitoring system should be established by the Department of Education to assess the effectiveness of any compensation incentive system implemented by a school district and should share the results of the evaluation with the other districts.*
- *A Quality Teacher Enhancement Fund should be established by the Legislature to enable school districts to obtain funds to offer innovative employment incentives and teacher salary supplements that meet the staffing needs of its schools and the needs of its teacher workforce. Programs that should be considered and evaluated by the State and school districts in order to retain high quality teachers include:*
 - *Extension of the school year calendar and teacher annual contract.*
 - *Debt reduction programs for new hires (new college graduates).*
 - *A bonus retention payment for 5 years of experience in the school system, and for 10 years of experience.*
 - *Funds to hire high quality, experienced teachers from other states or districts.*
 - *Employment of adjunct, part-time teachers.*
 - *Job sharing among teachers.*
 - *Discounted tuition at a state postsecondary institution for dependents of teachers.*
- *The Florida Mentor Teacher School Pilot Program should be expanded.*

1c. HARD-TO-STAFF, LOW PERFORMING SCHOOLS

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 9.

A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN MUST BE ESTABLISHED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND FUNDED BY THE LEGISLATURE TO ENSURE THAT SCHOOL DISTRICTS AND SCHOOLS HAVE THE RESOURCES NEEDED TO EMPLOY AND RETAIN HIGH QUALITY, EXPERIENCED TEACHERS IN LOW PERFORMING OR HARD-TO-STAFF SCHOOLS.

Discussion

Florida has many schools that are located in high poverty, urban neighborhoods and in isolated rural areas that serve students who have fared least well according to all available measures of student achievement. In numerous cases, students who have the greatest need for the most highly skilled

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teachers are educated in schools that are most likely to employ under-prepared and inexperienced teachers, as these schools typically hire a disproportionate share of new teachers. Typically, hard-to-staff schools serve students with more special needs and fewer social advantages, and teachers in these schools are not compensated for having or gaining the special skills necessary to meet these student's significant needs. Schools with weak leadership and meager resources further undermine progress at low achieving schools. Passage of the class size amendment will exacerbate this problem as the more crowded schools, which will do the most hiring to meet student/teacher ratios, will hire the most teachers currently employed in these high poverty, urban neighborhoods and isolated rural areas.

Employing and retaining high quality teachers in hard-to-staff, low performing schools are difficult tasks. A state teacher survey in North Carolina found that only 30 percent of teachers would accept an assignment in a low-performing school, even with significant financial incentives. Further, national reports show that approximately 20 percent of teachers in high poverty schools leave employment every year.

In Florida, a number of school districts have begun to target these schools for improvement. The Palm Beach County school district has initiated a bonus incentive pilot program at a D-rated school that, if successful, may be mirrored in other schools in the district. The pilot program, which focuses on reading and mathematics, is designed to offer a \$7,000 bonus to teachers who are willing to work in low-performing schools. Teachers accepting the bonus are expected to work additional hours, up to 175 per year, to attend training seminars, tutor and visit students' homes. Administrators hope that the program, though costly, will attract experienced, high-performing teachers to needy schools, which have been demonstrated to employ the least-experienced teachers.

The Duval County school district and teacher union have drafted a proposal providing a series of incentives to encourage more experienced teachers to work in low-performing schools. Those hired to work in the selected schools must pledge to remain there for four years. Teachers and principals are eligible for a \$2,500 annual salary supplement depending upon demonstrated improvement of student achievement. Participants in the program who fail to improve student achievement could be denied additional money and transferred to another school. Because the school system cannot afford the program due to budget constraints, the District is now turning to local businesses for contributions to raise the money necessary to implement the plan.

Policy Implications

High poverty and low performing schools face ongoing staffing challenges because, not surprisingly, most teachers would rather teach in academically strong schools with adequate resources and motivated students. Further, beginning teachers are often assigned to these schools to teach the most difficult students or subjects for whom they lack adequate preparation. This situation quickly frustrates new teachers and causes many to leave the profession, which does not serve the best interests of the students.

Special efforts are needed to attract strong teachers to these hard-to-staff schools who have the commitment and passion to persist in challenging environments - and these teachers must receive the support necessary to enable them to be successful. A number of states are offering financial incentives and bonuses (up to \$20,000 in California and \$10,000 in New York), relocation expenses, housing subsidies and special administrative assignments to entice high quality teachers to classrooms where they are needed most.

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Recruitment programs for hard-to-staff schools are most successful when planned and implemented by school districts and local schools. Teacher surveys have found that what matters most to teachers in these schools are smaller class size, strong leadership, instructional support and extra planning time. Some have reported that strong school leadership is equally important to financial compensation. Ultimately, teachers will go and stay where they believe that they have a reasonable chance of success.

Implementation Strategies

- *Partnerships among teacher preparation programs and school districts that implement innovative programs that effectively target teacher training and professional development in low performing, hard-to-staff schools should be promoted and rewarded.*
- *School districts must avoid the assignment of new, inexperienced teachers to schools that have been identified as low performing, hard-to-staff schools. More importantly, teachers should not be assigned to teach students for whom they are not prepared and/or subjects for whom they are not prepared.*
- *The Department of Education should track the placement and performance of first-year teachers and should monitor teacher incentive programs for low-performing schools that are being piloted by certain school districts to determine the degree of success and possible applications to other problem program areas.*

ISSUE 2: TEACHER INDUCTION PROGRAMS

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 10.

A FORMAL TEACHER INDUCTION PROGRAM SHOULD BE IMPLEMENTED IN EVERY SCHOOL AND SHOULD BE SUPPORTED BY THE LEGISLATURE THROUGH A TARGETED INCENTIVE FUNDING PROGRAM.

Discussion

Beginning teachers are often termed “works in progress” and face unique working conditions as they adjust to having total responsibility for student learning. They must not only be competent in their subject and know how to teach it, they must maintain a climate in which teaching and learning can take place. An important factor that influences whether beginning teachers will remain in the profession is the amount of support and guidance they receive from school administrators and colleagues. A strong, structured mentoring program can create a safety net for the most vulnerable teachers by strengthening their skills and knowledge and pairing them with experienced, successful teachers. Such programs can initiate the processes of socialization to the teaching profession, guide adjustment to the procedures and mores of the school and school system and further develop instructional and classroom management skills.

Nationally, proactive school districts and schools have reduced attrition rates of beginning teachers by more than two-thirds by providing expert mentors with release time to coach beginning teachers in their first year on the job. Induction programs provide a master teacher or mentor teacher to

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provide ongoing professional support that beginning teachers need once they begin to manage their own classrooms. Some state programs establish a three-member team that consists of a faculty from a college or university, a school administrator and a mentor teacher. Training provides assistance with instructional methods, curricular requirements, classroom management, and student assessment.

Policy Implications

Well-crafted teacher induction programs represent a significant teacher retention strategy and have proven their value in reducing attrition rates among new teachers. Specifically, these programs can improve teaching quality, help deter the flow of novice teachers from the profession and, in doing so, decrease the overall cost of recruiting, preparing and developing teachers.

Effective induction programs provide novice teachers with opportunities to observe real teaching situations and with on-going guidance and assessment by an expert in the field who has been trained as a mentor. More importantly, these new teachers are assisted in methods to transfer knowledge, skills, beliefs and attitudes to improve student learning. These programs require a significant commitment of resources, including skilled and well-trained mentor teachers, classroom-based research and adequate time for new teacher support. Districts and schools that recruit and employ new teachers, however, must bear responsibility for making sure that a professional and nurturing environment exists that will allow these teachers to succeed.

Implementation Strategies

- *Induction programs for new teachers should include on-going professional support through a structured mentoring program.*
- *The Department of Education should provide guidelines and structure to the districts and schools for teacher induction programs.*

ISSUE 3: TEACHER RETIREMENT ISSUES AND THE DEFERRED RETIREMENT OPTION PROGRAM (DROP)

POLICY RECOMMENDATION 11.

FLORIDA RETIREMENT SYSTEM POLICIES, PARTICULARLY THE DEFERRED RETIREMENT OPTION PROGRAM (DROP), SHOULD BE REVIEWED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT SERVICES AND THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH AND/OR MODIFY POLICIES TO INCREASE THE RETENTION OF HIGH QUALITY TEACHERS.

Discussion

The Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP) is a retirement program implemented in July 1998 within the Florida Retirement System. This program is available to all public employees, including classroom teachers, who are eligible for normal retirement and whose employers participate in the Florida Retirement System (FRS). Eligibility for normal retirement is defined as (1)

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having vested (six years of credible service) and reached age 62 or older; or (2) reaching 30 years of state service regardless of age.

DROP allows participants to retire and begin accumulating retirement benefits, without terminating employment, for up to 60 months from the date the participant first reached normal retirement. While enrolled in DROP, participants' monthly retirement benefits remain in the FRS Trust Fund, earning tax-deferred interest, as participants continue to work (without earning additional retirement credit). When DROP participation ends, participants must terminate all employment with FRS employers and, at that time, will receive payment of the accumulated DROP benefits in addition to monthly retirement benefits. Thus, the program allows participants to simultaneously earn a salary and a retirement income, which offers the opportunity to accumulate an additional tax-deferred "nest-egg."

Most eligible participants must notify the Department of Management Services of their election to participate in DROP no later than 12 months after reaching the normal retirement date or the end of their eligible deferral period. Failure to do so voids a potential participants eligibility to participate in the program. However, Florida classroom teachers are permitted a special exception allowing them unlimited deferral of the date they may begin participation in the DROP program. "Instructional staff," as defined in Section 1012.01(2), F.S., may choose to participate in DROP at any time after their normal retirement date and still participate for up to 60 months. This provision, which became effective July 1, 2001, is available only to these defined instructional personnel, not school administrators or other support staff.

For 12 months after DROP ends, participants cannot receive a monthly retirement benefit while being employed by an FRS employer. However, another exception exists for Florida classroom teachers, permitting them the ability to work part-time during this interim period. For the first month of the 12-month period, a teacher must terminate all employment with FRS employers. Classroom teachers can then be employed on a non-contractual, part-time basis for up to 780 hours over the subsequent 11 months without suspending the receipt of their retirement benefits. At the end of the 12-month period, there are no limitations on FRS employment, and teachers may return to full-time employment and again begin to accumulate credit toward a second retirement benefit.

At present, no information is available from the Department of Management Services relative to the number of classroom teachers participating in the DROP program. Participants in the program are currently tracked by their former retirement membership class and employer (i.e., school district), not by subject area or position title. In mid-2003, however, the Division expects to implement reporting changes that will allow educational employers to identify instructional personnel who are eligible to defer DROP participation to any time after reaching normal retirement.

According to the Department of Education's Office of Strategy Planning, an analysis of information from the school districts and from the Department of Management Services indicates that nearly three fourths of the teachers who were eligible to retire in 1998 entered DROP. DROP is postulated to have its greatest effect on the demand for teachers in 2003, the year those who entered DROP in 1998 complete five years in the program, the maximum participation period permitted at that time.

Policy Implications

Reemployment after DROP

Section 121.091 (9)(b), F.S., states that "...no person may receive both a salary from reemployment with any agency participating in the Florida Retirement System and retirement benefits under this chapter for a period of 12 months immediately subsequent to the date of retirement."

This one-year period between the end of participation in DROP and re-entry into employment with an FRS employer without suspending retirement benefits has been the subject of some debate. Opponents of the law call for its deletion, allowing employees to return to full-time work after the initial one-month termination period rather than twelve months.

According to representatives of the Department of Management Services and a study conducted by Milliman and Robertson, Inc., Actuaries and Consultants, there is a constitutionally mandated, quantitative cost associated with the elimination of the one-year waiting period. If the one-year waiting period were eliminated, the associated cost would have to be borne by public employers and would have to be funded at the time the benefit becomes effective. This would result in a significant increase in the retirement contribution rate and possibly a significant reduction in the actuarial surplus assets associated with the FRS depending upon the enacted funding mechanism. According to the report, the liability associated with immediate reemployment is estimated at \$2.34 billion.

Elimination of the one-year waiting period for instructional staff only will result in a similar significant cost. However, in this case, the cost would be borne directly by the school districts, thereby increasing their retirement contribution rates, which could have a detrimental effect upon hiring.

Instructional staff have been granted an exception to the one-year reemployment restriction, which permits them to work part time (up to 780 hours) as substitute or hourly teachers during the period. Given the significance of the cost associated with eliminating the one-year waiting period, as well as the existing exceptions to reemployment restrictions for instructional staff that permit them to work part-time during the period, the one-year period should remain in place. The benefits associated with its elimination relative to reemploying retired teachers into the workforce would be outweighed by the costs that would be incurred.

Extension of DROP Participation Period

A more palatable alternative to retaining teachers in the workforce would be to extend the participation period in DROP for teachers. Currently, the program permits participants to enroll in the program for a period of up to 60 months. Increasing the participation period in the program would provide a financial inducement for teachers to remain in the workforce, and could ease the predicted 2003 exodus from employment and postpone it over future years. According to Department of Management Services representatives, the costs associated with the extension of the DROP period are not as significant and would not require a reduction in the FRS actuarial surplus assets or require increased retirement contribution rates from public employers such as the state or school districts.

A second exception granted to Florida instructional staff permits them to declare when their DROP participation begins at any time after reaching normal retirement, rather than within one year of

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reaching eligibility, as is the case with all other classes of employee groups. This exception, coupled with an extended available DROP participation period, would provide an outlet for retaining experienced instructional staff while focusing on recruitment efforts to replace them. The exception would also ease the predicted exodus from the teaching profession due to retirement expected in 2003 and afterward.

According to the Department of Education's Office of Strategy Planning, the rate of teacher termination due to retirement has been traditionally flat, with a peak expected in 2003 due to the exit of DROP participants who enrolled in 1998. The Office has found that administrators and support staff, not classroom teachers, are the primary groups planning retirement in 2003 after DROP participation.

Alternative methods to provide employment incentives to the Florida teaching profession have been considered by the Legislature and the Department of Management Services. In 2001, an actuarial study was conducted on the feasibility of allowing a 25-year normal retirement, instead of the standard 30-year period. The study examined three different scenarios, one of which involved providing a 25-year retirement to only instructional personnel employed by school boards. It was determined that this action would increase the contribution rate for instructional personnel by 2.09% and would incur an additional, unfunded actuarial liability of \$1.1 billion.

There have been bills introduced in the Legislature in recent years that proposed to increase the per year accrual value for teachers, but none of these bills have survived the legislative process. According to DMS representatives, such a proposal would need to be fully developed in order to be effectively analyzed. For example, would the proposal provide a different per year accrual value for each year of teaching service or for any year of state service as long as the employee retires as a teacher? Any proposal that will change the benefit formula under the FRS pension plan requires an actuarial special study examining the fiscal impact on retirement benefits. This fiscal impact would have to be fully funded by the State at the time the benefit change becomes effective under Florida law.

Implementation Strategies

- ***Section 121.091(13)(b)(1), Florida Statutes, Participation in the DROP, should be amended by the Legislature to extend the current 60-month period of participation in the DROP for Florida instructional personnel.***
- ***The Department of Education, in consultation with the Department of Management Services, should determine the appropriate period of DROP extension in order to maximize the maintenance of the teacher workforce while emphasizing recruitment efforts toward younger teachers. The effective date of this change should be no later than May 31, 2003 to allow current DROP participants the ability to extend their participation before being required to terminate employment.***
- ***The Department of Education and the Department of Management Services should conduct an actuarial study on the effect of increasing the per year retirement accrual value for Florida teachers. Multiple alternative scenarios should be explored and the fiscal impact of the proposed change should be identified and measured.***

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- *The Department of Education should produce annual reports when the mechanism for data collection is in place in mid-2003 to indicate the retirement patterns of instructional personnel. These data should be compiled and used to project future openings in the workforce and as a guide for recruitment efforts.*